

RESOURCE

Example stories to introduce educators as credible and authentic messengers for CSE

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Read some example stories to get a better sense of how we boost the credibility and authenticity of our educators in engaging and accessible ways.



About Projet Jeune Leader

PJL is a youth-founded, youth-led, and youth-centered nonprofit organization established in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar. Since 2013, Projet Jeune Leader has delivered comprehensive sexuality education to young and very young adolescents (ages 10-16) in Madagascar's public middle schools, partnering closely with schools and school districts. To do this, we recruit dynamic young adults (aged 18-25) for their positive gender attitudes and potential as role models, train them rigorously over two months, and hire them under a full-time, paid contract if they pass an end-of-training assessment. We then integrate each of them into a partner public school where they teach a year-long, time-tabled CSE course to multiple grades using our age-segmented, gender-transformative, 27-module curricula. When they are not teaching, educators provide a package of other essential services (enrichment activities, counseling, medical referrals, and programs for parents and teachers).

About the Guidance Tool: *CSE We Can Count On*

Projet Jeune Leader has developed “CSE We Can Count On,” a publication sharing strategies, actionable guidance, and tools that we use in our work with tens of thousands of students, parents, teachers, and school officials in Madagascar to build and harness community support for in-school comprehensive sexuality education. This document, which accompanies the guidance tool, shares one of the resources that we use regularly.



Read “CSE We Can Count On” and accompanying resources at www.projetjeuneleader.org/resources/community-support.

The uses and success of this resource are undeniably dependent on the context in which CSE is being delivered. Even so, we hope that it serves as a source of inspiration and creativity for others – civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and even governments – committed to delivering in-school comprehensive sexuality education in their own contexts.

Projet Jeune Leader regularly publishes our educators' personal stories online and in constituent voice magazines to showcase their dedication, values, warmth, humor, determination, and the insights they have as young people and educators. Feedback from readers show that they find the educators' stories profoundly inspirational, suggesting these stories help spread the "brand power" of Projet Jeune Leader educators across different communities.

Before deciding on a story to tell, we consider our strategy, including the:

1. PURPOSE (Why are we telling this story?)
2. AUDIENCE (Who do we want the story to resonate with?)

Often, the purpose of Projet Jeune Leader's stories is to address common questions about CSE educators in our context (for example, how are the educators recruited? What are the criteria for becoming an educator?). Other times, we use their stories to help explain components of the CSE program as well as highlight why our educators are best placed to deliver them.

We are also intentional about the language and framing of stories when considering our audience. For example, the stories spotlighted below are meant for parents and teachers in *rural areas*. Specific settings and details (for example, emphasizing that the educator is from a rural village, or using common proverbs) are included to ensure the stories "feel real" to these readers. We also use bright colors and illustrations to make the stories attractive and interesting.

Finally, before publishing any stories, we ensure educators are informed partners. They tell us how they would like their story to be told. We ask for their consent to proceed throughout the storytelling process – from the interview to the final draft to the final dissemination.

Here are a few examples of our stories, and some key details and considerations we had when writing them.

#1 – Lanja's Story

- The original purpose of this story was to highlight the rigorous selection criteria and training process for CSE educators – and therefore ease any parental concerns about the quality of their children's education with Projet Jeune Leader educators.
- It is framed as a "Hero" story and taps into the universal theme of "overcoming adversity through hard work."

- Certain setting and details (e.g., “I would walk through valleys, across rice fields, in the cold to get to school”) are specific to: 1) make the story resonate with parents from rural areas where Projet Jeune Leader works, 2) showcase Lanja’s lived experience and therefore boost his credibility and authenticity.

“Lanja’s story is wonderful. Here’s to hoping that adolescents take on Lanja’s traits – that nothing ventured is nothing gained.” – Comment from a parent, Sandrandahy middle school

“Thank you for encouraging my child to lead in the classroom, thank you Lanja for giving the kids the motivation to continue their education.” – Comment from a parent, Fiadanana middle school

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

My name is Lanja. I was born in a rural area in the Amoron'i Mania region. It is difficult to get education where I live because schools are located in remote places.

However, I believe in the saying, "nothing ventured, nothing gained." I always attended school because education is very important to me. I used to leave home at dawn, I would walk through valleys, across rice fields, in the cold to get to school. As soon as school was over, I ran back home before it got dark. That was what my life was like from primary to high school, until I made it! I proudly graduated high school.

I then moved to the city to continue my education. At first, I lived with relatives so my life was easy. I did not yet miss my parents even though I was far away.

Later on, however, I had to move out on my own, and my troubles started by day. My challenges did not end when I moved to the city. I had to go to school every day, and I had to walk through valleys, across rice fields, in the cold to get to school. As soon as school was over, I ran back home before it got dark. That was what my life was like from primary to high school, until I made it! I proudly graduated high school.

Unfortunately, my education was expensive and toward the end of my studies, money had become scarce. But I refused to give up...

I went out to find a job, but after a while, I still had no leads. I was about to give up when one Friday, I received a call from a friend, asking me to go for an interview for a job. After the interview, they told me that they were looking for young people to be educators. They gave a description of the requirements for the position: young people, aged from 18 to 25, and high school graduates. (I fit!) Also, you need to be motivated and have good communication skills. Finally, some experience in education, animation skills, and ability to communicate with young people would be a plus. I thought to myself: I must be the right person they are looking for! That all the criteria were met, and I had the experience required. That had to be the right person for the job!

By my tiny, tiny middy!

I was eventually among the first to be selected for the interview at Projet Jeune Leader's headquarters. Most of the young people who were candidates thought I had always believed in fighting for what I wanted, despite my situation. But I don't give up!

Many of the applicants highlighted their experience in other jobs. On my side, I demonstrated that I was experienced in teaching, leadership and management, as well as in public events animation.

If I succeeded at this stage, I would be among the first people to attend the educator training.

After the interview, I went home and waited. I jumped whenever my phone rang, until finally, I received the good news! I had been selected for the position. My heart was beating fast and my hands were shaking so, unaware of the call.

I studied for joy the same way I would if I earned a good salary or a better market. I was among those selected to get the training again. I made it!

Later, I found out that some people were selected for the training, but only they would be given the educator position. So, I went to the first interview and passed, but during the second interview, I was not selected. However, there was no way I could let that go and wait.

I made every effort to do my best. Though I was anxious, I fully participated in the training and developed good relationships with my peers. I made every effort to master the responsibilities I would need to have for the middle school students, so I would be able to help them get a great future. If I were to fail, it'd be because I tried so hard but not because I gave up!

But I didn't fail. Once again, I made it. I got the position of PE, Educator. My absolute priority is to be of great use to my students, but for the time being, my priority is to work with the Projet Jeune Leader team to ensure that the young people who are in the same situation as I was when I started my journey are able to continue their education and to have a better future.

NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED? RIGHT?!

Nothing ventured, nothing gained!
LANJA'S STORY

My name is Lanja. I was born in a rural area in the Amoron'i Mania region. It is difficult to get education where I live because schools are located in remote places.

However, I believe in the saying, "nothing ventured, nothing gained." I always attended school because education is very important to me. I used to leave home at dawn. I would walk through valleys, across rice fields, in the cold to get to school. As soon as school was over, I ran back home before it got dark. That was what my life was like from primary to high school, until I made it! I proudly graduated high school.

I then moved to the city to continue my education. At first, I lived with relatives so my life was easy, I did not yet miss my parents even though I was far away.

Later on, however, I had to move out on my own, and my troubles started. My daily life changed a lot. I ate when I wanted to; I went to bed without eating when I was too lazy to cook; the laundry basket was full and the house was a mess! I had to remind myself that “nothing ventured, nothing gained,” so I learned to discipline myself to put my life back on track. As the Malagasy saying goes: “Your belly is not your back: it has to be filled! You cannot focus with an empty stomach!” I learned to cook myself and do my chores. And eventually, I got used to it. I made it!

Unfortunately, my education was expensive, and toward the end of my studies, money had become scarce. But I refused to give up. I went out to find a job. But after a while, I still had no leads. I was about to give up when one Friday, I received a call from a friend, inviting me to a job fair organized by Projet Jeune Leader... They told the attendees that their program was aimed at helping middle school students finish school, lead healthier lives, and secure brighter futures. I was interested so I started listening carefully... They added that they were looking for young people to be educators. They gave a description of the requirements for the position: young people, aged from 18 to 25, and high school graduates. I fit that! Also required: non-smoker and non-drinker. I still fit in! They added, you must not be married and have no children yet. I met those criteria as well! Finally, some experience in education, group animation skills, and ability to communicate with young people would be a plus. I thought to myself, I must be the type of young person they are looking for! I met all the criteria and had the experience required. I had to be the right person for the job!

I was eventually among the first 10 applicants selected for the interview at Projet Jeune Leader’s headquarters. Most of the young interviewees were impressive. Though I had always believed in fighting for what I wanted, doubts crept in... But I didn’t give up yet.

Many of the applicants highlighted their experience in other jobs. On my side, I demonstrated that I was experienced in youth group leadership and management as well as in public events animation.

If I succeeded at this stage, I would be among the five people selected to attend the educator training.

After the interview, I went home and waited. I jumped whenever my phone rang until finally, I saw the very number of Projet Jeune Leader on my phone. My heart was beating fast and my hands were shaking as I answered the call...

I shouted for joy the same way I would if I scored a goal during a soccer match! I was among those who will get the training! Again, I made it!

I later found out that nine people were selected for the training, but only five would be given the educator position! So, I wasn't at the finish line yet! I panicked a bit at first, but then I straightened myself up and started planning well. The training itself was part of the selection process, and therefore, there was no way I could sit back and relax! I made every effort to do my best. Though I was anxious, I fully participated in the training and developed good interpersonal relationships with my peers. I made every effort to master the responsibilities I would need to have for the middle school students, so I would be able to help them get a great future. If I were to fail, let it be because I tried too hard but not because I gave up!

But I didn't fail... Once again, I made it. I got the position of PJJL Educator. My studies are a story to be continued at some point, but for the time being, my priority is to work with Projet Jeune Leader. I have been happily busy helping my little brothers and sisters build a winner's character like mine, believing in yourself enough to stick to what it takes to reach your goals... because....

Nothing ventured, nothing gained! Right?

#2 and #3 – Myriam's and Loic's Stories

- The purpose of these stories is to highlight how educators' backgrounds drive their intrinsic motivation and passion for their work with children.
- The challenges Myriam and Loic faced as children are common social problems in the local context. Connecting their stories to their current work as CSE educators helps center the purpose of CSE into existing worldviews of local partner communities.

A TROUBLE SHARED IS A TROUBLE HALVED!

MYRIAM WAS ONCE A YOUNG GIRL
From Mangaka, a remote village in Iwamirivie Ifasy. She went to primary school there, but later moved to the big city to live in a boarding house and attend middle school.



On the other hand, Myriam liked helping at her boarding house, as she used to do with her mom back home in her village. The lady in charge of the boarding house was fond of Myriam because of that. They became close, and often teased each other. Sometimes, the lady would even bring her some candy when she came back from shopping.



WE CHOOSE MYRIAM!



At her new middle school, there were three classes of 6 graders: A, B, and C. Students were placed in the three categories based on their academic performance. Category A six-graders were the top-notch primary school graduates, and Myriam was placed there. She was among the best students where she came from, but at the new school she soon felt to the bottom of the class. She felt discriminated against in class because she was from a rural village, and could not make friends. Nobody ever chose to work with her during group work. What could have happened?

As time went on, Myriam decided to share her problem with this new, trusted adult in her life. She was reluctant at first but then found a moment when they could have a quiet talk. The lady listened to her, helped her and encouraged her to change her attitude and look at the situation from a new perspective.

AFTER THAT, MYRIAM BECAME MORE SELF-CONFIDENT and made more effort in class. Her relationship with the other children also improved.

Now, Myriam is an adult who helps children who go through difficult times. She listens to them, gives them advice, helps them to build self-confidence and make the right decisions as she has become a PJJL Educator herself.



STUDENTS: if you have a problem or need some advice, don't keep it to yourself. Find a trustworthy adult like a PJJL Educator because "a trouble shared is a trouble halved!"



Trouble shared is trouble halved!

MYRIAM'S STORY

Myriam was once a young girl from Manjaka, a remote village in Miarinarivo Itasy. She went to primary school there, but later moved to the big city to live in a boarding house and attend middle school.

At her new middle school, there were three classes of 6 graders: A, B, and C. Students were placed in the three categories based on their academic performance. Category A six-graders were the top-notch primary school graduates, and Myriam was placed there. She was among the best students where she came from, but at the new school she soon fell to the bottom of the class. She felt discriminated against in class because she was from a rural village and could not make friends. Nobody ever chose to work with her during group work. What could have happened?

She was so sad. She even started to dislike studying. Every single day she only thought about going back home to her village. She dreaded going to school.

On the other hand, Myriam liked helping at her boarding house, as she used to do with her mom back home in her village. The lady in charge of the boarding house was fond of Myriam because of that. They became close, and often teased each other. Sometimes, the lady would even bring her some candy when she came back from shopping.

As time went on, Myriam decided to share her problem with this new, trusted adult in her life. She was reluctant at first but then found a moment when they could have a quiet talk. The lady listened to her, helped her, and encouraged her to change her attitude and look at the situation from a new perspective. As a result, Myriam became more self-confident and made more effort in class. Her relationship with the other children also improved.

Now, Myriam is the one who helps children who go through difficult times. She listens to them, gives them advice, and helps them to build self confidence and make the right decisions as she has become a PjL Educator herself.

Students, if you have a problem or need some advice, don't keep it to yourself. Find a trustworthy adult like a PjL Educator because "trouble shared is trouble halved!"

PJL Educators are specially-selected young people who share information and skills with students in public middle schools. They are there to help students and support them to reach their goals. Each PJL Educator has their own unique characteristics, and their own unique backstory. Let's talk about the story of one PJL Educator named Loic.



OVERCOMING THE PAST

"I had a difficult childhood before I got to where I am now," recalls Loic, "because my dad left me and my mom before I was born." He goes on to tell his story:

"My mom was faced with hardship so when I was two, she felt she needed a man to help her. However, it made my life worse as I grew up and became more aware of our situation. I felt neglected at home as a child.

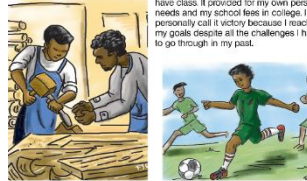
Despite the love my mother showed me, I felt lonely and uncomfortable. I was not really at ease asking for anything, like the other kids did, because my stepdad never took me as his own child. Later, when I went to middle school, I had to find ways to make money when I didn't have class because I didn't dare ask my parents to pay for my expenses at school.

I actually didn't mind that much: It gave me good excuse to get out of the house since my stepdad and I were never in good terms. I worked for my uncle. He owned a wood cutting machine for his carpentry business. I worked as an apprentice carpenter on Wednesday afternoons and on Saturdays. I also bagged sawdust and sold it 200 ariary a bag.

Like everybody, I rested on Sundays and spent the whole day playing or watching soccer. I loved everything about the game, including the stories of the famous soccer players. I learned a lot from the story of Messi. Messi had some growth problems as a child and was raised in a poor family, but he managed to build a successful life and has become famous worldwide. I took his life story as inspiration, which helped me build self-confidence and perseverance, keeping me going in whatever I did.

I never neglected schoolwork, because in mind, what my aunt told me, when I was eleven, I used to talk to her and she would console me that if I make every effort at school and succeed in life, I will never have to live what I was going through again.

As time went on, our relationship at home got worse so I decided to move out on my own when I graduated high school. I started providing for myself. I stepped asking for my mom's support because I had become a skilled carpenter, learning from my uncle, and did carpentry when I didn't have class. It provided for my own personal needs and my school fees in college. I personally call it victory because I reached my goals despite all the challenges I had to go through in my past.



I can even say that I achieved my life goal: I am now able to help young adolescents who are going through the same challenges.

"I know many children are going through the same hard times I have been through. I want to help them because I know how they feel. I listen to them, and show them that it's possible to get through it."

During Projet Jeune Leader's recruitment for educators, Loic showed enthusiasm and dedication. During his educator training, he showed self-confidence and leadership skills. The hard time he went through prepared him for his role as a PJL Educator: he is especially able to help and counsel young people in reaching their goals despite all the trials they go through. One of his responsibilities is to provide counseling, which gives him the opportunity to listen, help and give advice to adolescents going through difficult times.

Many students who come to see him for counseling don't know his life story, though. Loic has the unique skills and experience to earn their trust and support them with their own goals.



OVERCOMING THE PAST LOIC'S STORY

PJL Educators are specially-selected young people who share information and skills with students in public middle schools. They are there to help students and support them to reach their goals. Each PJL Educator has their own unique characteristics, and their own unique backstory. Let's talk about the story of one PJL Educator named Loic.

"I had a difficult childhood before I got to where I am now," recalls Loic, "because my dad left me and my mom before I was born." He goes on to tell his story:

"My mom was faced with hardship so when I was two years old, she felt she needed another man to help her. However, it made my life worse as I grew up and became more aware of our situation. I felt neglected at home as a child.

Despite the love my mother showed me, I felt lonely and uncomfortable. I was not really at ease asking for anything, like the other kids did, because my stepdad never took me as his own child. Later, when I went to middle school, I had to find ways to make money when I didn't have class because I didn't dare ask my parents to pay for my expenses at school.

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I never neglected schoolwork, keeping in mind what my aunt had told me. When I was down, I used to talk to her and she would remind me that if I make every effort at school and succeed in life, I will never have to live what I was going through again.

As time went on, our relationship at home got worse so I decided to move out on my own when I graduated high school. I started providing for myself. I stopped asking for my mom's support because I had become a skilled carpenter, learning from my uncle, and did carpentry when I didn't have class. It provided for my own personal needs and my school fees in college. I personally call it victory because I reached my goals despite all the challenges I had to go through in my past.

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Many students who come to see him for counseling don't know his life story, though. He has the unique skills and experience to earn their trust and help them with their own lives.

#4 Andry's Story

- The purpose of this story is to showcase positive impacts of CSE beyond just knowledge gains. For example, Andry gained self-confidence, took responsibility, and felt that he gained a trusted adult because of the CSE program.
- It also highlights Andry's values, warmth, and determination – important characteristics of credible messengers for CSE.



A DREAM COME TRUE... ANDRY'S STORY

I was in 8th grade when the PjL Educators started at my school. I remember when I went to my first class with them; I was so happy to have them as “older siblings.” I felt I could trust them to help me if I had a problem. They taught us with games that connected the students heart-to-heart with the educators – we were still children, after all.

I was really close to the Educator named Soilihi – I wanted to be just like him. During recreation breaks I would offer to help. “Andry is in charge of organizing all the cards,” Soilihi declared to the other students. It was the first time I was given responsibility and felt confident in myself. That was what really made me to want to become a leader in other parts of my life – and led me to have the goal of becoming a PjL Educator, too.

A few years later, after I graduated high school, I heard that Projet Jeune Leader was recruiting. It was finally my chance to be among the new cohort of just 15 educators.

Over 400 young people showed up for the open recruitment. Instead of being discouraged, I used the leadership skills I had learned in the past and pushed through with the self-confidence I knew I had. I believe that my desire to continue with Soilihi's work shined through. And I made it! My dream of becoming a PjL Educator had come true – and what's more, I became an Educator at the very same school where my PjL Educators had taught me.

My favorite part of the job is going around and visiting with students every morning before class – giving them fist pumps and seeing them happy. I like talking to the kids. I feel a sense of responsibility for them, especially since they trust me to help them if they have a problem. Whether it's just to chat, or to come ask for help, they know they can always talk to PjL Educator Andry.



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